

### **Statement on the Senate Vote To Reduce Entitlement Spending**

*December 21, 2005*

The Senate vote to reduce entitlement spending is a victory for taxpayers, fiscal restraint, and responsible budgeting, and it will help keep us on track to cut the deficit in half by 2009. I applaud the Republicans in the House and Senate who supported the legislation. This will be the first time in nearly a decade that Congress has reduced entitlement spending. This strong bill demonstrates our commitment to funding our Nation's priorities and ensuring that taxpayer money is spent wisely.

### **Remarks on Departure for Camp David, Maryland**

*December 22, 2005*

I hope you all have a happy holiday. This has been a year of strong progress toward a freer, more peaceful world and a prosperous America. We had three sets of elections in Iraq. This is an amazing moment in the history of liberty. A new Parliament has been seated in Afghanistan. Our economy is strong and getting stronger. People are working. We've added 4.5 million new jobs since April of 2003. Productivity is up. Small businesses are flourishing. Homeownership is high. It's been a good year for the American people.

We've got a lot of work to do. Yesterday and during this past week, the Congress acted in a wise way with the taxpayers' money, fiscally responsible set of appropriations bills that were passed that funded important priorities, key priorities—to make sure our troops have what they need to do their job. The DOD bill did just that. Another key priority is to make sure the people in the gulf coast of our country get the help they need to help rebuild New Orleans and the Mississippi gulf coast. And there is a good deal of money available for those who suffered from Katrina and Rita.

It appears to me that the Congress understands we've got to keep the PATRIOT Act in place, that we're still under threat. There's still an enemy that wants to harm us, and

they understand the PATRIOT Act is an important tool for those of us here in the executive branch to use to protect our fellow citizens. The Senate extended the PATRIOT Act by 6 months.

As we head into the holiday season, I do want to say to the families of those who have got a loved one deployed overseas, we stand with you, and we pray with you for the safety of your loved one. We want to send our greetings to your loved one overseas and tell him how much we appreciate you serving for the cause of freedom and peace.

Anyway, I hope you all have a great holiday. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Statement on Congressional Action Funding the Armed Forces for the War on Terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Elsewhere**

*December 22, 2005*

I applaud the Congress for passing legislation to fund our troops who are fighting the war on terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. This funding will help us continue to hunt down the terrorists, pursue our strategy for victory in Iraq, and make America more secure. I look forward to signing the bill into law.

### **Statement on Congressional Action To Reauthorize the PATRIOT Act**

*December 22, 2005*

I appreciate the strong commitment by the majority of the House and of the Senate to reauthorize the PATRIOT Act. The terrorists are determined to strike America again and inflict even greater damage than they did on September 11, 2001. The PATRIOT Act is essential to protecting the American people against the terrorists. The Act tore down the wall between law enforcement and intelligence officials so that they can share information and work together to help prevent